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BRIDGESTONE/FIRESTONE ARTICLES

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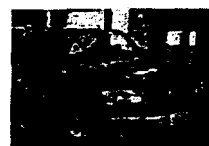


Washington Steps in to Firestone Tire Probe

A Ford Explorer, equipped with Firestone Wilderness tires, sits in a dealer's lot in Montpelier, Vt. (Toby Talbot/AP Photo)

abc NEWS.com

Aug. 25 — Congressional investigators met with Ford Motor Co. officials today to discuss the recall of 6.5 million Firestone tires. Federal regulators, meanwhile, are considering whether more tires need to be pulled off the road.



video

Ford officials defend their recommendations on air pressure. RealVideo (download RealPlayer)

For the congressional investigators who visited Ford headquarters, the key questions were these: When did the automaker realize it had a problem with Firestone tires, and should it have alerted motorists and the government earlier?

Four members of the House Commerce Committee traveled to Dearborn, Mich., on the orders of Chairman Tom Bliley, R-Va., to review Ford's company documents related to the recall.

The Senate Commerce Committee has also scheduled a Sept. 6 hearing to ask why the National Highway Transportation Safety Board waited so long to act on the problem, calling NHTSA, Ford and Bridgestone-Firestone officials to speak.

The NHTSA says Ford knew it had a serious problem at least a year ago, when it began replacing Firestone tires on SUVs in the Middle East. And it turns out there were reports of tire failure a year earlier, in Venezuela.

Yet Ford provided none of that information to the government until three weeks ago — and that was two months after the government asked for it.

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Bridgestone Feels the Burn

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"In this case it would have been helpful to have known that ... incredibly helpful and possibly saved lives," said NHTSA's Sue Bailey today.

[to Deaths](#)

Workers Claim Defects

Lawmakers also want to know why it took so long for NHTSA to respond, given a decade of evidence.

The agency received its first two consumer complaints about Firestone ATX tires in 1990. The first lawsuit was filed against the tiremaker that same year. And in 1998, State Farm Insurance sent the agency an e-mail message about 21 incidents involving Firestone tires.

But it was not until May of this year, after 90 complaints and four reports of fatalities, that the agency began its investigation and asked Ford for details.

"Anytime we see a trend that indicates a defect, we promptly open an investigation, and that's what happened here," Bailey said.

But the real problem may be that NHTSA lacks proper investigative authority.

"The agency does not have requirements that would force manufacturers to provide them with overseas recalls or with product liability complaints," said Sean Kane of Strategic Safety. "Those are two very early warning signs that would help the agency determine product defect trend."

The Department of Transportation may ask Congress to approve such requirements. In the meantime, congressional investigators visit Firestone headquarters on Monday.

Profit Ahead of Safety?

What investigators want to know is whether the tiremaker sacrificed safety for profits.

In sworn statements supporting civil lawsuits against Firestone, former workers from the tire company's Decatur, Ill., plant said they were told to let bad tires through the quality-control process.

"Production took preference over quality ... it was just always push, push, push," former worker Darrell Burke said on *Good Morning America*.

Firestone insists it has a rigorous inspection process at the Decatur plant, and argues that the four workers who testified were "disgruntled former employees" who left the company during a bitter labor dispute in 1995.

No one claims to know what caused crashes involving cars with Firestone tires that have killed 62 people. Firestone suggests poor maintenance or underinflation were to blame; the lawsuits imply a defective production process.

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Calls for Wider Recall

Earlier this month, Bridgestone/Firestone Inc. said it would recall all of its Firestone P235/75R15 size radial ATX and ATX II tires, and Wilderness AT tires after the NHTSA had received complaints linking 46 deaths and 80 injuries to its tires.

The amount later rose, the NHTSA said, to 62 deaths and 100 injuries.

Most of the tires in question were installed on Ford trucks, notably the Ford Explorer sport utility vehicle. The recall has created a shortage of 15-inch replacement tires and the tire company this week began importing tires from its manufacturing plants in Japan to cover the shortfall.

Ralph Nader's Center for Auto Safety, meanwhile, has filed a lawsuit to force the companies to broaden the recall beyond 15-inch truck tires to all ATX, ATX II and Wilderness ATs still on the road.

"There have been complaints and product liability lawsuits and deaths and injuries in other size tires in this country. We believe they're as defective as the ones being recalled," said CAS president Clarence Ditlow.

Ditlow accused Ford and Firestone of covering up defective tires to save money.

"Ford and Firestone are attempting to do what they do best, which is place their own economic interest before safety," he said.

Manufacturer Defends Tires

Bridgestone/Firestone spokesman Walt Sharp said the recall is broad enough.

"The statistical evidence demonstrates that there are no concerns with those other tires," he said.

Companies are already straining to meet demand for the current recall — a situation that would be even worse if the recall was widened, Sharp said.

"There's simply not enough tires in the supply stream to replace 6.5 million tires," he said.

It might take until Spring of 2001 for the current recall to be completed, he said.

"We are maximizing production, our competitors are maximizing production and we're working to do it as quickly as possible," he said.

The Center for Auto Safety's Ditlow said expanding the recall to 18.5 million tires would not greatly delay the arrival of new tires, and that Firestone managed a similarly sized recall in the 1970s, with the defective Firestone 500 tires.

"If you look back in time, we did get 19.5 million tires recalled in the '70s ... if you could do it then, you can do it now," he said.

ABCNEWS' Bill Redeker contributed to this report.

Bridgestone Feels the Burn

Aug. 25 — The Firestone tire recall took a heavy bite out of parent company Bridgestone's profits.

The Japanese company saw profits drop 48.5 percent in the first half of this year as opposed to last year. The tire maker reported earnings of \$176.9 million in the six months ending June 30, down from \$343.3 million a year ago.

The company estimated the recall would cost \$348.1 million; the loss was included in this year's figures.

Bridgestone's sales slipped 4.8 percent to \$9.28 billion in the first half. Bridgestone originally reports its earnings in yen.

— *The Associated Press*

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Ford Replaces Tires

Safety Regulators Design New Tests

A worker at the National Tire and Battery store in Dallas, Texas, removes a recalled Firestone tire. (LM Otero/AP Photo)

The Associated Press

Aug. 13 — Ford Motor Co. has told almost 3,000 dealers not to wait for Bridgestone/Firestone Inc.'s rolling recall of 6.5 million tires, which the tire company is stretching out over one year, according to a published report.



video

ABCNEWS' Ron Claiborne on Firestone's Woes. RealVideo (download RealPlayer)

Meanwhile, safety regulators have begun to work on new tests to detect similar problems that caused the tire recall.

Ford has authorized its dealers to replace tires immediately with models from Firestone competitors, including Goodyear, Michelin and Uniroyal, the *Detroit Free Press* reported Saturday.

With an estimated 1 million Ford light trucks carrying recalled tires in the United States, Firestone could end up paying if Ford dealers with tires under warranty outfit Explorers and light trucks with tires from Firestone's competitors.

With 2,900 Ford dealers authorized to sell and service tires, the move also would leave Bridgestone/Firestone's recall plan in question.

Designing New Tests

Days after Firestone's announcement, highway safety regulators are trying to update 30-year-old tests for automobile tires that would prevent surprises like the problems that led to the Firestone tire failures.

Rae Tyson, a spokesman for the National

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Highway Traffic Safety Administration, confirmed that a new test is being designed to detect flaws similar to those in the Firestone tires. *The Washington Post* first reported the initiative on its Web site Friday night.

Experts say existing tests are insufficient and regulators were blindsided by the Firestone tire failures, culminating in the massive recall of tires this week.

Neither the tire maker, Bridgestone/Firestone Inc., nor Ford, which used the tires on its Explorer sport-utility vehicle, has been able to explain what caused the failures.

The current test checks for strength, endurance and how well the tire stays in the rim — but was designed for an earlier generation of tires. The recalled tires passed that test in 1990 and 1997.

Experts also criticized existing reporting standards. Ford wasn't required to disclose that the company had replaced 50,000 tires on its sport-utility vehicles overseas in the last year.

The Department of Transportation has also complained to Congress that the maximum civil penalty that can be levied against companies for slow action on a recall is too low. The NHTSA fined Ford about \$425,000 after it determined that Ford delayed notifying regulators of a problem with an ignition switch.

Recall Outrages Customers

The tire company on Wednesday announced a three-tier recall to manage demand for replacements, outraging worried customers and state officials not at the top of the list. South Carolina Attorney General Charlie Condon threatened to sue if his and other Southern states weren't included in the recall immediately.

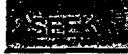
Firestone's recall began in Texas, California, Arizona and Florida. In the fall, replacements are to be offered in Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada, Oklahoma and Tennessee. The third phase covers the rest of the country and is expected to be completed by the end of 2001.

The tires involved in the recall are P235/75R15 Firestone radial ATX and radial ATX II tires and Wilderness AT tires carrying the code name "VD," most of which are on Ford vehicles. The government is investigating the tires in more than 300 accidents. ■

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Firestone Reaching One Million Mark in Drive to Replace Recalled Tires

Updated 6:00 AM ET August 26, 2000

NASHVILLE, Tenn., Aug. 26 /PRNewswire/ -- This weekend Bridgestone/Firestone and other tire retailers will pass the 1 million tire mark in the drive to replace recalled Firestone Wilderness AT tires in size P235/75R15 produced at the company's Decatur, Ill plant and Radial ATX and Radial ATX II tires in the same size.

"We appreciate the patience and understanding that so many of our Firestone customers have shown during this major undertaking," said John Lampe, executive vice president, Bridgestone/Firestone, Inc. "We're doing everything in our power to replace all recalled tires as quickly as possible."

The conservative estimate of reaching at least 1 million tire replacements this weekend was made after reaching the 850,000 mark on Wednesday of this week.

Currently, Bridgestone/Firestone manufacturing plants in the United States have increased production by 7,000 tires daily in the size needed to replace recalled tires to meet consumer needs. In addition, Bridgestone manufacturing plants in Japan are air lifting thousands of tires to assist with the recall, and competitive manufacturers are increasing production.

"Our employees and dealers are responding to this challenge with energy and commitment," Lampe said. "We're also grateful for the cooperation of independent tire retailers, Ford/Mercury dealers and competing tire makers."

Lampe said Firestone engineers and others are continuing their investigation to identify the root cause or causes of the tire failures that led to the recall. In addition, Bridgestone/Firestone announced today that the company plans to retain a leading independent tire expert or experts to examine and verify the company's internal investigation process.

Fact: Christine Karbowiak or Marianna Deal, both of Bridgestone/Firestone Media Hotline, 877-201-2373



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NEWS

Published Tuesday, August 22, 2000, in the Miami Herald

Ford to halt production at 3 truck plants for tire recall

Ford Herald Wire Services

DETROIT — Ford Motor Co. will halt production at three truck plants for more than a week to free up 70,000 tires for use as replacements in the recall of 6.5 million Firestone tires.

The plants will close from Aug. 28 to Sept. 8 so that 15-inch tires used in production of Ford Explorer/Mercury Mountaineer sport utility vehicles and Ford Ranger pickups can be sent to Ford and Lincoln/Mercury dealers.

"We're doing this to make the most replacement tires available as soon as possible," said Martin Inglis, vice president of Ford North America. "The shutdown will decrease the gap between demand for those replacement tires and supply."

Bridgestone/Firestone has recalled all P235/75R15 ATX and ATX II tires as well as 15-inch Wilderness AT tires made at a plant in Decatur, Ill. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is investigating 62 deaths and more than 100 injuries that could be linked to those tires.

To reassure customers who own or lease the Explorer, Ford's best-selling sport-utility vehicle, Chief Executive Jac Nasser was to appear in a one-minute ad during ABC's Monday Night Football. Ford will run the spot this week on various network and cable channels.

"We've been working around the clock to identify the problem and replace the affected tires as quickly as possible," Nasser says in the ad. "You have my personal guarantee that all the resources of Ford Motor Co. are directed to resolve this situation."

The unprecedented move by a major automaker came even as a safety advocacy group filed a lawsuit to force Bridgestone/Firestone and Ford to widen the recall beyond those 15-inch truck tires.

The Center for Auto Safety, which successfully pushed for 1970s recalls of the Ford Pinto and 14.5 million Firestone 500 tires, contends 12 million more Firestone tires — all ATX, ATX II and Wilderness ATs still on the road — should be recalled, and that the recall should be overseen by a judge. A Ford spokesman said the range of the recall was sufficient and the companies were "going heaven and earth" to replace tires.

Inglis said the plant shutdown would cut about 25,000 vehicles from Ford's production — 15,000 Rangers and 10,000 Explorers/Mountaineers. Not all of those vehicles would have used 15-inch tires, but Inglis said there was no way to schedule production without them.

The plants in St. Paul, Minn.; Edison, N.J.; and Hazelwood, Mo., employ about 50 workers, who will still get paid. Inglis said the move would affect Ford's earnings but declined to say by how much.

He said by mid-September, the tire industry should have ramped up production enough to provide more replacement tires.

The recall of Bridgestone/Firestone tires has created an apparent nationwide shortage of 15-inch tires, even as Ford has authorized more than 30 brands to replace recalled Firestone tires.

But the Center for Auto Safety contends the recall is not broad enough.

Clarence Ditlow, director of the center, said the group filed suit because it believed it could move faster than the federal government to force a wider recall.

"We need to take all possible actions to get this defect remedied," Ditlow said.

Ford and Bridgestone/Firestone maintain that data on complaints filed by consumers suggest that only the tires under recall have shown a spike in problems with treads separating while vehicles are in motion. Most of the recalled tires were installed on Ford trucks, including the popular Explorer sport utility vehicle.

Limiting the recall to one size and one plant made no sense, Ditlow said. If the problem is with the Decatur plant — where Ford and Bridgestone/Firestone have many of the recalled tires were made — then other tire lines made at the plant should also be recalled, he said. If the problem is a design defect, as the center believes, all the sizes in that design should be recalled.

A spokesman for Ford said the company would look at the group's data, but reiterated that the companies' data shows only the models recalled have been linked to problems.

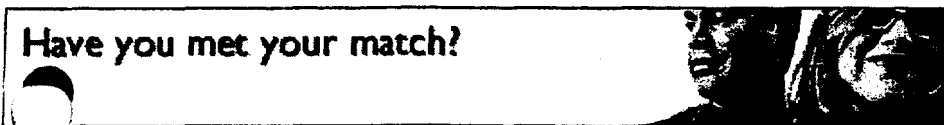
The lawsuit was filed in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C. Several attorneys around the country have filed lawsuits seeking class-action status to represent consumers hurt by the recall.

In a Miami case, Bridgestone/Firestone has filed to have jurisdiction moved from state to federal court. On Monday, U.S. District Judge Paul Huck didn't rule from the bench on the dispute and gave attorneys two weeks to file papers supporting their arguments.

Lawyers for consumers are seeking a court order requiring Firestone to create a voucher system to cover the upfront cost of tire replacements plus damages for other expenses.



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Bridgestone 6-month results hit by recall

TOKYO: Bridgestone Corp counted the cost of its massive US recall of Firestone brand tyres on Friday, reporting a 48.5 percent dive in net earnings for the first six months of this year.

As a costly airlift of tyres from three Japanese plants gathered momentum and the U.S. Congress signalled a possible tougher look at the recall, Firestone's Japanese parent issued interim results that reflected the financial toll of the debacle.

Bridgestone's charge of 37,000 yen (\$350 million), announced two weeks ago to cover the cost of replacing 6.5 million tyres in the United States, drove consolidated net profit down to 18.9 billion yen (\$177 million) for the six months to June, from 36.7 billion yen a year before.

Sales in the period, which ended before news emerged of widespread problems with the tyres, skidded 4.8 percent to 991.2 billion yen. Bridgestone blamed this on the strong yen, which erodes the value of goods sold abroad by Japanese companies.

It said if not for the strong yen, sales in North America and Europe would have risen, although sales in Japan were down.

Bridgestone, which bought Firestone in 1988, said the overall costs of replacing the tyres would lead to a 24 percent drop in net earnings this year to 67 billion yen, repeating a forecast it made on August 10.

"The revised projection reflects tyre replacement costs associated with the recall," Bridgestone said in a statement.

On Wednesday, it began a massive airlift of tyres



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from Japan in a bid to speed up the recall.

[Ford dealers to sell cars on the Net](#)

The 15-inch ATX, ATX II and Wilderness AT tyres, most of which are standard equipment on Ford Motor Co's popular Explorer sport utility vehicle, were recalled earlier this month after reports about peeling treads and blown tyres.

[Miner Billiton trumps bidding for Rio Algom](#)

U.S. highway safety officials are investigating the tyres and their link to at least 62 deaths.

Transportation industry sources in the United States say Firestone's airlift could be costing the company as much as \$60 per tyre.

Firestone expects 2,000 tyres will be airlifted the first week, 2,800 in each of the next two weeks and 5,600 per week every week through the end of the year, company officials say. Some are expected to be shipped by sea.

Investors, fretting about consumers deserting the Firestone brand and costs arising from a potential ballooning of lawsuits, have dumped shares in Bridgestone, sending them down 38 percent since August 4 when U.S. retailer Sears, Roebuck and Co said it stopped selling certain Firestone tyres.

On Friday, Bridgestone's shares ended at 1,516, up two yen on the day.

A U.S. Senate panel will call top officials at Firestone, Ford Motor and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to testify about the tyres, a congressional aide said on Thursday. *(Reuters)*

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Friday August 18, 6:48 pm Eastern Time

Press Release

SOURCE: Uniroyal Tire

Bridgestone/Firestone Approves Uniroyal Tires For Replacement in Firestone Recall

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GREENVILLE, S.C., Aug. 18 /PRNewswire/ -- Consumer demand for tires has been overwhelming since Firestone announced a recall of 6.5 million tires last week. Now, Uniroyal Tire has been formally approved by Bridgestone/Firestone, Inc. to provide tires to consumers affected by the recall. Bridgestone/Firestone will reimburse up to \$100 per tire, including mounting and balance charges and taxes, to consumers who purchase Uniroyal tires to replace their recalled Firestone tires.

"We know this is a difficult time, and we are doing everything we can to help Firestone customers affected by the recall," said Uniroyal Tire Brand Manager Joe Herget. "Our plants are operating around the clock, seven days a week to meet this extraordinary consumer demand. We are working extremely hard to get tires to our dealers just as quickly as possible."

Herget said Uniroyal Tire has worked with Ford Motor Co. to identify specific Uniroyal tires that have been authorized by Ford as replacements for the recalled Firestone tires. Information pertaining to the recall has been communicated to the national network of 5,000 Uniroyal Tire dealers.

Consumers who wish to replace their recalled Firestone tires with Uniroyal tires can determine the proper Uniroyal tire for their vehicle by consulting an authorized dealer, the company's Web site (www.uniroyal.com) or its consumer toll-free hotline at (877)-UNIROYAL.

The Uniroyal Tire Web site provides consumers instant access to tire replacement information. The site also contains easy access to information on the Uniroyal Tire dealer network, a tire selection guide, consumer hotline and other useful tire-related information.

In addition to offering a broad range of standard tire lines that fit most of today's popular vehicles, Uniroyal is the only tire brand with a full line of self-sealing tires designed specifically for SUVs and pickups. The Laredo® with NailGard® tire is designed to prevent flats -- it instantly and permanently seals 90 percent of tread punctures 3/16" or less.

The Uniroyal brand has a long and proud history in the tire business. The brand's history dates back to 1892 as the United States Rubber Company. That company began manufacturing and marketing tires with the Uniroyal name in 1906. Today, the Uniroyal brand markets a wide variety of high-quality, high-mileage tires for many of America's most popular family vehicles and light trucks.

SOURCE: Uniroyal Tire

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Bridgestone Expects Further **REUTERS** Financial Hit

Tuesday, October 10, 2000

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (Reuters) - Bridgestone/Firestone Inc. new Chief Executive Officer John Lampe said Tuesday the company's Japanese parent is likely to record a further \$100 million charge this year to cover the cost of the tire recall.

Lampe said the charge would be in addition to the \$350 million charge Bridgestone Corp. (5108.T) has already disclosed it would take to pay for the recall of 6.5 million tires in the United States.

The addition cost is due to Bridgestone's decision to accelerate the completion date of the recall to this year instead of sometime in 2001.

"Mr. Kaizaki has stated that it will probably be necessary to take another \$100 million of charges in this calendar year," Lampe said, referring to Bridgestone President Yoichiro Kaizaki.

Lampe, addressing reporters at a news conference, also gave strong support to the beleaguered Firestone brand name, saying "Nobody is willing to give up on the name Firestone."

Lampe also criticized Ford Motor Co. (F.N) for blaming Firestone exclusively for the recall. Most of the recalled tires were on Ford Explorers.

Lampe said accident data show that only a small number of Explorer rollover accidents are due to tire failures. And he said there have been a number of Explorer accidents with tire failures that did not involve Firestone tires.

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